UNDP assistance for promotion of rural tourism

*17. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is offering any assistance for promoting rural tourism in the country;

(b) if so, the scope of such cooperation by the UNDP;

(c) the number of such sites which have been identified for rural tourism; and

(d) the number of such rural tourism circuits which have been operationalised, so far?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (KUMARI SELJA): (a) to (d) Ministry of Tourism provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to the State Governments/Union Territories for infrastructure development in rural sites which have core-competency in art, craft, culture, handloom/textiles etc. and close proximity to tourist destinations and circuits, under the Scheme of Product/Infrastructure Development for Destinations and Circuits. Community participation and capacity building, including skill upgradation in such rural sites are being supported through Government of India — United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project on Endogenous Tourism and Ministry of Tourism's scheme — Capacity Building for Service Providers. Based on the proposal received from State Governments/Union Territories, Ministry of Tourism sanctions Rs. 50.00 lakh for infrastructure development and Rs. 20.00 lakh for capacity building for each rural site, subject to *inter-se* priority and availability of funds in the respective heads. UNDP project has assisted Capacity Building at 36 sites. UNDP has also extended support for other activities such as design development, waste management, development of Management Information System (MIS) and creation and maintenance of website *www.exploreruralindia.org*.

The list of 142 Rural Tourism projects sanctioned to date including 36 with UNDP funds is given in the Statement. [Refer to the Statement appended to the answer to SQ. No. 8 pt (a) and (b)]

Protest against racial attacks

*18. SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state whether it is a fact that the local Australian police have been targeting Indian students for protesting against recent racial attacks?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): No, Sir.

River linking project

*19. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has given up the much talked about River-Linking Project;

(b) if not, by when would it be taken up for implementation; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Based on various studies conducted, National Water Development Agency (NWDA) has identified 30 links (16 under Peninsular Component and 14 under Himalayan Component) for preparation of Feasibility Reports (FRs).

The National Common Minimum Programme launched by the last UPA Government indicated that it would make a comprehensive assessment of the feasibility of linking the rivers of the country starting with the south bound rivers and this assessment would be done in a fully consultative manner. It would also explore the feasibility of linking sub basins of rivers in States like Bihar. After the comprehensive assessment, it has been decided that river linking programme be continued with a focus on peninsular rivers. Five links under Peninsular Component namely (i) Ken-Betwa, (ii) Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal, (iii) Damanganga-Pinjal, (iv) Par-Tapi-Narmada and (v) Godavari (Polavaram)-Krishna (Vijayawada) were identified as priority links for building consensus among the concerned states for taking up their DPRs. Also, the preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) of river inter-linking projects and pre feasibility/feasibility reports of intra state links as proposed by States were included in the functions of NWDA *vide* resolution dated 30.11.2006.

NWDA has completed FRs of 14 links under Peninsular Component and 2 links (Indian Portion) under Himalayan Component, out of which, FRs of 8 links under peninsular component and 2 links (Indian Portion) under Himalayan component were completed during X Plan. DPR of one priority link namely Ken-Betwa was taken up by NWDA after signing of a tripartite agreement between the Government of India and concerned States of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh on 25.08.2005 which has been completed on 31.12.2008. Further, NWDA has taken up the preparation of DPRs of another two priority links namely Par-Tapi-Narmada and Damanganga - Pinjal which are planned to be completed by December, 2011. NWDA has also completed Pre Feasibility reports of 4 intrastate links during 2008-09. The implementation of inter basin water transfer link projects depend upon the consensus and cooperation of the concerned States and agreements with the neighbouring countries.

(c) Does not arise.

Summit in Russia

*20. SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state: